

## Thomas Hart Benton to Andrew Jackson, June 15, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### THOMAS H. BENTON TO JACKSON.

Washington City, June 15, 1813.

*Dear sir* , I have been three weeks in this city, and had intended to have written to you by each successive mail, but put it off from one day to another in hopes of getting a definitive and satisfactory answer on the subject of the transportation. You had already had so much vexation on that subject that I was unwilling to add to it by letting you know that there was any thing like delay or uncertainty to attend the payment of these accounts. A satisfactory answer I have now received; but not until this very day (Tuesday 15th. June.<sup>1</sup> )

<sup>1</sup> The day before this letter was written, June 14, occurred Col. William Carroll's duel with Jesse Benton, brother of Thomas H. Benton, in which Jackson acted as Carroll's second. When he learned of it, Benton was very angry. He felt that Jackson should not have taken part against Jesse Benton while he, Thomas, was trying to get Jackson's accounts settled in Washington. He expressed his sentiments freely. Gossip carried his utterances to Jackson and the result was an encounter in Nashville on Sept. 4.

Soon after my arrival here I presented your letter to the Sec. of War. Two or three days afterwards I called upon him, to receive his answer, and give such information as he might require. He was particular in his inquiry whether the Dep. Q. M. General at New Orleans had refused the payment of the draughts which you had drawn in favor of the waggoners. I detailed to him the reasons which I had for knowing that, notwithstanding those draughts had not been presented to him, yet that Mr. Andrews in refusing to pay them was acting

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in conformity to instructions which he had received from Col. Shambourg. The answer which he gave me was verbal, to wit; that the claims would have to be transmitted to this place, and to pass through the Accountants office. The delay, to say the least of it, that would have attended this mode, made it far from being satisfactory; and I determined to give the business a more serious turn. I then addressed to the Sec. a formal note, stating my objections to the mode he had proposed, and suggesting another, which would keep clear of the accountants office, and come at once to the justice of the case. A copy of that note was enclosed. I took care to require his answer in writing. This note was delivered to the chief clerk of the war office on the day of its date; and I called soon after for the answer. The clerk informed me that the Sec. had carried out my note to consider of it on the Sunday following at his leisure; and now on this day, having called again at the war office, I received from him the note of which I enclose you a copy; so that at least this agent is ordered to pay.

Things go on but slowly here. The tax bills, tho reported, have not yet been taken up: but they will be passed I conceive by considerable majorities. The Senate have been sitting for three weeks with closed doors. It is very well known that they are engaged on the subject of Mr. Gallatin's appointment. The scuffle is to get Gallatin out of the treasury; and to do that, a strong party in the Senate, perhaps the majority, require his resignation of Secretaryship before they confirm his nomination of ambassador.

Hampton has passed on to the north; Wilkinson is ordered there also, but is very slow in going. The third regiment from New Orleans is also ordered there. Davie and Ogden have refused their appointments. Dinsmoor is here, upon what business I do not exactly know, but expect that he is called to some account for some of his official conduct, perhaps touching the passports.

The President enquired after your health in terms of particular kindness. Your Volunteers are spoken of here in the most honorable terms. Those who were so friendly to us at Natchez have extended their good offices even here, and transmitted the best accounts

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of our conduct. I understand from some of the members that they intend to take advantage in the first suitable opening, and to press you for a Brigadier Generalship.

I have no prospect of immediate active service. The best prospect I see is to be sent back to recruit a new regiment; of which it is proposed that John Williams of Knoxville shall be Colonel; myself Lt. Col. Carrol Major, and Geor. West 2d. do. I undertook to convince the Sec. of War that two regiments could be raised sooner than one. When I gave him all my reasons he said he thought so too; but there was but one regiment but what was appropriated to other states. By the present regulations two regiments make a brigade; two brigades make a division etc. so that, if two regiments had been allotted to our state, a General would have been appointed of course. . . . .